

PLUPERFECT PERIPHRASES IN MEDIEVAL GREEK: A PERSPECTIVE ON THE COLLABORATION BETWEEN LINGUISTICS AND PHILOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the history of the Medieval Greek ‘BE + aorist participle’ periphrastic construction with the aim of contributing to the understanding of its development and arguing in favour of a particular methodological perspective for historical linguistics. Specifically, by exploring the diachrony of this verbal construction, which has been neglected in historical accounts of Greek, I propose that an adequate explanation for all its properties will require us to supplement our theoretically informed linguistic approach with parameters pertaining to the textual nature of the historical data. My conclusion will emphasize the necessity of a close collaboration between linguistics and philology.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Greek perfect and its diachronic mutations have been a very attractive area for both philologists and modern linguists. Since Chantraine’s (1927) inspiring study, aspects of the history of the category perfect in Greek have been eagerly explored and have been of significant value in the understanding of crucial issues in the historical linguistics research agenda (e.g. Moser 1988 on grammaticalization, Haug 2008 on factors driving semantic change, or Drinka 2003 on areal/contact linguistics). However, there remain parts of its history that are until now either under-studied or unclarified, and their exploration may prove to be very fruitful from a methodological point of view.

In my contribution I focus on a virtually unstudied Medieval Greek periphrastic construction. According to my analysis, this form was used for a specific time period as the most grammaticalised exponent of the perfect. In sections 2 and 3 I touch upon the synchronic and diachronic properties of that particular construction and discuss its connections to the history of the category perfect in Post-classical Greek. In section 4, I argue that some of the peculiarities of the periphrasis are the expected outcome of a grammaticalization process initiated in Classical Greek. However, the adoption of that stance, which capitalizes on the systematic dimension of a dead language but leaves out its textual nature, fails to illuminate important diachronic problems and hence does not provide a thorough historical account. In order to obtain a fuller explanation, we need to go back to texts and inspect closely all the information that the textual language can offer. In the conclusion, it will become clear that the collaboration between linguistics and philology is a *sine qua non* of the historical linguistic studies.

2. ‘INDECLINABLE PERIPHRASES’ IN MEDIEVAL GREEK

2.1. *The data*

Medieval vernacular Greek is a text language that exhibits a high degree of linguistic variation.¹ The extensive variation implies that a writer or a scribe has an array of options at his disposal that cover all the levels of language (from the mere stylistic to phonology, morphology and syntax).² The perfect is among the categories that vary considerably during the Medieval period³; its expression, both as present perfect and (past or) pluperfect, is far from being crystallized during the whole of the Post-classical period in the history of Greek. Even in the Late Medieval period (11th–17th centuries) the category fluctuates between several means of encoding. A less well-known expression is a periphrasis formed by the copula/auxiliary verb *ime* ‘to be’ marked for the past tense plus an indeclinable participle-like form, which diachronically derives from the Ancient Greek aorist participle.⁴

(1) a. ke iton apothanonda i proti tu γινεκα
and she.was having-died the first his wife
 ‘and his first wife had died’ (Chron. Mor. H 8073)

b. kalion tu na iton fiyonda o tapinos ekinos
better his MOD he.was having-gone the humble that
 ‘it would have been better for that humble man to have gone’
 (War. Tr. 14244)

These constructions are generally not discussed in the relevant literature.⁵ One basic reason for this is that the whole corpus is restricted to fifteen examples from the *Chronicle of Morea* and another six passages from the *War of Troy* (both date to the 14th century, and represent a substantial sample of Medieval vernacular Greek). As far as the latter text is concerned, the fact that it remained unpublished until relatively recently ensured that the instances remained completely unknown. Even the editors do not refer to them in the chapter containing the linguistic description of the text (see War. Tr. lxx).

2.2. *Properties of the periphrasis*

Even though participial periphrastic forms were common in almost all periods of the history of Greek, this particular Medieval construction exhibits special formal and semantic properties that keep it distinct from both earlier and contemporaneous formations. Its most basic formal properties are the following:

(a) The loss of concord between the participial form and the subject of the verbal form. In the examples under (1) the participles have the same ending *-onda*, whereas their subjects differ in gender marking (feminine in (1a) but masculine in (1b)). This suffix is not an ad hoc

¹The nature of older or dead languages as basically ‘text languages’ has been emphasized by Fleischmann (2000: 34), who draws attention to their special properties and argues for a methodology that would pay heed to those properties.

²For detailed discussion see Manolessou (2008) and the references therein.

³The term ‘perfect’ is generally ambiguous, since it is used either for the entire paradigm of the perfect or for the present perfect. Here, for reasons of clarity, I will use it only with reference to the whole paradigm (i.e. present, past – or pluperfect- and future perfect).

⁴In this paper I make a rather informal and traditional use of the term periphrasis. Thus, it is used to name both an auxiliary verb construction and a participial construction of the form ‘copula + participle’.

⁵Except for Aerts (1965: 113), who refers to some of the instances, these forms are also mentioned by Bubenik (2001) and Horrocks (2010: 301). Neither researcher offers any detailed treatment.

formation but is taken from the former regular declensional paradigm of the present active participles of Ancient Greek. An *-onta* ending is found in both masculine accusative singular and neuter nominative and accusative plural:⁶

(2) Masc. sing.: <i>grapho:n</i> ‘writing’	Neuter pl.: <i>graphonta</i> ‘writing’
Nom. <i>grapho:n</i>	Nom. <i>graphonta</i>
Gen. <i>graphontos</i>	Gen. <i>graphonto:n</i>
Dat. <i>graphonti</i>	Dat. <i>grapho:si</i>
Acc. <i>graphonta</i>	Acc. <i>graphonta</i>

It is unclear on which of the two the Medieval *-onda* is based.⁷ However, as the same ending is used in the formation of the gerund in Medieval and Modern Greek, and in light of evidence that the indeclinable suffix originates in the masculine accusative singular form (Manolessou 2005: 247), I consider that in the periphrases at hand the participial ending has been taken from the masculine paradigm.

(b) The *-onda* suffix is combined with the characteristic *-s-* of the aorist, in the case of verbs belonging to the regular conjugation. Thus, the purely aoristic *-sanda* has given way to a hybrid *-sonda* (the present ending *-onda* plus the perfective marker *-s-*) (e.g. *piisonda*, instead of *piisanda*). As for the irregular verbs, which mark the aspectual information on the stem itself, an unstressed *-onda* suffix is only used: e.g. *apobanonda*.

(c) In connection with the previous property, the irregular verbs show the tendency to promote their stress up to the antepenultimate syllable, instead of the penultimate, which would be the expected one in Classical and Hellenistic-Roman usage: e.g. *fiyonda* (instead of *fiyόnda*).

(d) The indeclinability is a characteristic of the active periphrasis only. For the passive, another periphrasis is used (which is formed with *ime* plus the former medio-passive perfect participle in *-menos/-i/-o*).

In sum, all these features indicate the idiosyncratic status of the construction: the finiteness requirements are satisfied by the copula while aspect is marked by the participle; the declensional information (gender and number) is lost; and what had originally been the participle is ‘frozen’ into an unmarked form that resembles the infinitive in other periphrastic verbal categories.⁸

In terms of its semantic value, the periphrasis denotes the pluperfect only, without any present perfect counterparts available in the texts. The pluperfect is usually taken as expressing the ‘past-in-the-past’ (cf. Binnick 1991: 264, 362) – i.e. it refers to an event that happened before another one in the past – and in this respect it differs from the other two versions of the perfect (i.e. the present and the future). In that sense, the construction is semantically stable, specialised in the expression of a particular meaning. This fact is yet another piece of evidence of its non-compositional nature, and is in line with the aforementioned formal peculiarities.

⁶This change points to a formal remodelling of the aorist participle that has been initiated earlier in the history of the language. Formal features of the present participles were taken over by the aorist form on analogical grounds (cf. Horrocks 2010: 298).

⁷To avoid any misunderstanding, I make it clear here that the differences in the transcriptions (e.g. *-onta* and *-onda*) reflect the change in pronunciation between the Classical/Hellenistic and subsequent periods (see Horrocks 2010: 118–20).

⁸The indeclinable participle in that case is similar to the formative *-i* used in the Modern Greek perfect (e.g. *exo γρaps-i* ‘I have written’).

Table 1. The participial periphrases in Greek

Period/type	Present	Aorist	Perfect
Classical Greek	+ gender + number + case	+ gender + number + case	+ gender + number + case
Hellenistic Greek	+ gender + number + case	+ gender + number + case	+ gender + number + case
Medieval Greek	+ gender + number + case	– gender – number – case	+ gender + number + case

2.3. Problems

The data presented are of interest in more than one respect: one highly problematic issue concerns the rarity of occurrence. Despite the fact that Late Medieval literature includes a relatively large text production in vernacular Greek, the *ime*-based construction is attested as an exponent of the pluperfect only in the two aforementioned chronicles. What can be hypothesised is that these periphrases are rare because they were *en route* to disappearance in the transition from Medieval to Modern Greek. But such an explanation is mere speculation and needs to be supported both theoretically and with specific textual evidence.

Another peculiarity is the indeclinability of the participial form, a fact which is in sharp contrast to the properties of the participial periphrases used in earlier or later periods of the language (see Table 1).⁹

Also, this property is absent from the contemporaneous periphrasis formed by *ime* plus an adjectival form which derives from what used to be the perfect medio-passive participle in Ancient Greek; note that this construction has predominantly a resultative meaning.¹⁰

(3) ruha uk eforei epano tu, os zoon in maliasmenos
clothes not he.wore on him.GEN, like animal he.was haired.MASC.NOM.SG
 ‘he didn’t wear clothes, [but] he was hairy like an animal’ (War Tr. 5223)

A possible explanation for this loss is the general morphosyntactic change that affected the participial system of Greek in the Post-classical period and led all the forms which belonged to the athematic (consonant-stem) declension to lose their nominal inflectional properties and become indeclinable (see Manolessou 2005: 262). This change was responsible for the appearance of the Modern Greek gerundial form. In contrast, the participles that followed the declension of thematic nouns (example (3)) remained intact from that change. However, this change seems to be connected to the adverbial use of the participle and not to the predicative function from which the periphrasis is derived. A participial form is licensed in a predicative position by virtue of its nominal properties. When these properties are absent, the periphrasis becomes impossible by default. For these reasons, another explanation should be sought for the indeclinability of the periphrasis.

The syntactic status of the construction appears to be another problematic issue. Greek BE-periphrases, both ancient (Aerts 1965) and later (Moser 1988), are usually analysed as predications, in which the verb is a copula and the participle is an adjectival predicate. In the cases under consideration, however, such an analysis is excluded, since the adjectival property of the participle is basically realized in the nominal declensional features of the participle, a

⁹Indeclinability of the participial forms is not unknown for Post-classical Greek. However, it always relates to the circumstantial use of the participle (see Manolessou 2005, where many examples are cited). Rarely can it be found in complement use and never in periphrastic.

¹⁰The precise status and interpretation of the ‘*ime* + -menos’ form in Modern Greek is a matter of debate, and several approaches have been made from different theoretical perspectives (see Lascaratou & Philippaki-Warburton 1983–4; Moser 1988; Anagnostopoulou 2003; Anagnostopoulou & Samioti 2011).

property that is inactive here. This problem raises the question of whether such a construction could have departed considerably from the older pattern on which the participial periphrases were based – or, to put it differently, whether it has been grammaticalised. Further, if a grammaticalisation explanation is postulated, this should also explain why such a diachronic process affected only the periphrases with the aorist active participles and not other participial analytic constructions (e.g. those formed with the same verb plus present participle), since they are all of the same kind syntactically.

In that connection, what needs to be investigated is how the evolution of this periphrasis is related to the changes that the category perfect underwent in Post-classical times. From a synchronic perspective, the question would concern the extent to which the periphrases took up and fulfilled functions usually reserved for the perfect. Before attempting to provide answers for these contradictions and problems, I sketch the earlier historical stages of this periphrastic construction up to the period in question, and also the diachrony of the functional area that it falls in (i.e. the perfect).

3. THE ‘AORIST PERIPHRASIS’ AND THE GREEK PERFECT

3.1. *The perfect in Greek*

The category ‘perfect’ exhibits a remarkable instability throughout the history of Greek.¹¹ Briefly, the category underwent the following semantic and formal restructurings:

- a. Early Ancient Greek (Homer): monolectic, Proto-Indo-European perfect (stative, intransitive) (e.g. *dede:a* ‘I am ablaze’) (8th c. BC).
- b. Classical Greek: resultative perfect (e.g. *bebe:ka* ‘I have proceeded’)/occasional use of *e:mi* ‘be’ + perfect participle (5th–4th c. BC).
- c. Hellenistic-Roman Greek (Koine): extensive overlap with the aorist/occasional use of *ekho* ‘have’ + perfect participle (3rd c. BC–4th c. AD).
- d. Medieval Greek: *exo* ‘have’ + perfect participle / *exo* + infinitive (e.g. *exo γραμένο/exo γραψει* ‘I have written’) (5th c.–15/16th c.).
- e. Modern Greek: *exo* + non-finite verbal form (17th c. to present).¹²

In the first stages (a, b) the perfect was basically monolectic. As far as its meaning is concerned, it is widely accepted that a major shift is discernible between stage (a) and stage (b). The stative semantics of the early period gave way to a mostly resultative semantic value that is the main function of the Classical Greek perfect.¹³ According to Chantraine (1927), this semantic change led to a functional overlap with the aorist – a situation that can in fact be traced in the interchangeable use of the two categories in stage (c). Finally, the monolectic perfect ceased to be a ‘living’ category some time in the Hellenistic-Roman period, and an array of periphrases became more important in expressing meanings usually identified for the category perfect. Among them the most ‘successful’ one was the *exo* ‘to have’ plus infinitive form, which won out and finally took over the expression of the perfect in Modern Greek.

However, the history of each form expressing meanings in the realm of the perfect is not straightforward, and in any case we should not posit a clear replacement of one means of expression by another. Even in Classical Greek we can easily find an array of periphrastic forms that were used alongside the ‘regular’ monolectic perfect. BE + mediopassive perfect

¹¹See Moser (1988) for a detailed account along with a review of the previous literature.

¹²In Modern Greek dialects the picture is quite a complicated one, with the participial constructions seemingly holding their place in the core paradigm (see Ralli, Melissaropoulou & Tsolakidis 2007).

¹³This view was developed by Chantraine (1927). A recent and theoretically oriented account that broadly follows Chantraine’s original insight is Haug (2008).

participle and HAVE + active aorist participle are usually considered the most important ones in this connection (cf. Drinka 2003: 105). In Hellenistic-Roman times, the periphrastic alternatives became popular as means of expression, creating a large set of options. In particular, in that period four modes for encoding perfect meanings can be found:

1. A monolectic perfect or aorist with almost no difference in meaning, given the functional and formal merging of the two categories from the Early Koine onwards.
2. The diachronically stable periphrasis formed with the verb *e:mi* plus medio-passive perfect participle (this actually seems to have been available as an alternative way to denote perfect semantics throughout the history of Greek).
3. A periphrasis with the verb *exo* plus the medio-passive perfect participle.
4. Another periphrasis formed with *e:mi* and the aorist participle.

This last periphrasis is usually left out from the discussions of forms and constructions that undertook to express perfect meanings in Post-classical times.¹⁴ In the following section I summarise the early history of the construction.

3.2. *The early stages of the aorist periphrasis*

The periphrasis under investigation has a long history before the particular Medieval attestations which are of primary interest here. It is first attested in the Classical Greek period (5th–4th c. BC). For the purposes of the discussion, I use the term ‘aorist periphrasis’ to refer to the construction formed by the copula verb *e:mi* plus the aorist participle (both active and medio-passive), as well as to the forms that were used in the latter periods of the language (Hellenistic-Roman and Medieval) and derive from that classical pattern.¹⁵ This clarification is of relevance here as the same term would be also applicable for the construction *ekho* + aorist participle (e.g. *ekho grapsas* ‘I have written’) found in Classical Greek. This periphrasis was part of a general pattern of Ancient Greek, namely *e:mi* + participle. This construction has been discussed extensively in the literature, with the attention being particularly to the present and perfect examples.¹⁶ According to Aerts (1965: 27), the aorist periphrasis is very rarely found in Classical Greek. Its meaning is rather obscure and is not directly connected to the perfect (either present or past). Consider the following example from Sophocles:

(4) *oute gar thrasüs/ out' oun prodeisas e:mi to: ge nün logo:*
neither PRT bold/ nor PRT scared.PRV I.am the PRT now word
I am neither bold, nor thrown into fear beforehand by what you just said'
(Soph. O.T. 90)

In the Hellenistic-Roman period (3rd c. BC–4th c. AD) we can find examples in which anteriority with respect to another past event seems to have been a crucial part of the semantics of the form:

¹⁴The most detailed study of the Post-classical perfect periphrases is Moser (1988), where very little information can be found about the construction in question.

¹⁵For convenience I use the morphological category of each participle (present, aorist, perfect) to denote the corresponding three periphrases. Obviously, this use is not directly related with the semantics of the participles, since, as already mentioned, the aorist periphrasis was used mainly as a pluperfect.

¹⁶Alexander (1883); Björck (1940); Aerts (1965).

(5) a. ho de Andreas ... ouk epegnō: auton: ε:n gar ho iε:sous
the PRT Andrew ... not recognized him: he.was PRT the Jesus
 krüpsas tε:n heutou theote:ta.
having-hidden the his divinity
 ‘Andrew didn’t recognize him: Jesus had hidden his divinity’
 (Acta Andr. et Matth. 114, 5)

b. Apε:thon de kai eis to ksenodoxeion hopou ε:n katalüsas,
went.they PRT and in the pension where was.he having-stayed
 ‘they went to the guest house as well, where he had stayed’
 (Acta Thomae, 16, 11–12)

These periphrases are frequent in the papyri and in the early Christian literature dependent on the Bible (e.g. the Apocrypha). This evolution connects the aorist periphrastic form to the perfect, and during the Early Medieval period (5th–10th c. AD) gained important ground:¹⁷

(6) a. ala in apelθon protrepsasθe voiθian
but he.was having-gone prompt help
 ‘but he was away to seek help’ (Malalas 101, 6)

b. in δiataksamenos o aftos Aleksanδros kratin... Ptolemeon
he.was having-ordered the this Alexander rule ... Ptolemy
 ‘It was Alexander itself that ordered Ptolemy to rule’
 (Malalas 196, 12)

c. on pende men isan parelθondes
which five PRT were.they having-gone
 ‘from which five had already gone’ (Max.
 Conf. Quest. 41, 30)

The picture described so far reveals three main facts:

1. A predecessor of the medieval periphrasis is found as early as in Classical Greek; its presence can be noticed among the other two BE-periphrases (present and perfect).
2. A semantic connection with the pluperfect meaning starts to develop in Hellenistic–Roman times.
3. The construction continued being used as a pluperfect during the Medieval period, having lost at some point the grammatical information relating to gender, number and case.

4. THE CHANGE

4.1. *From predication to periphrasis*

Turning now to the questions set out in section 2.3, it can plausibly be argued that these periphrases are the outcome of a grammaticalisation process, which gradually transformed a regular syntactic pattern (copula predication) into an analytic verbal complex (auxiliary verb + complement). In the mainstream approach, grammaticalisation is taken as a pragmatically driven, semantically conditioned diachronic force that renews the grammatical

¹⁷Psaltes (1913: 230) and Vogeser (1907: 14) provide catalogues with data from various kinds of early medieval texts.

ical inventories of the languages in a unidirectional fashion.¹⁸ In this article I do not aim to delve into the nature of grammaticalization and the problems that it faces when it comes to copula-based constructions like the one at hand (see Hoffmann 1997; Giannaris 2011). The way I understand that process here is basically the one developed by Lehmann, and focuses on the formulation of a series of correlated parameters that aim to capture the structural properties of grammaticalisation in a synchronic and diachronic perspective (see Lehmann 1995; 2004).

The conditions for such a process seem to be met: the construction consists of a BE-verb, which is commonly used as an auxiliary, the complement is an invariable verbal form, and the meaning of the entire periphrastic form belongs to a grammatical category, namely the pluperfect. Such an account can be further established by looking at the first instances of the aorist periphrasis in Classical Greek and comparing them to the other two BE-periphrases that did not follow the same route of evolution:

(7) a. esti tauta te:n hekastou hrathumian humo:n epauksanonta
they.is these the everybody's apathy us strengthening
 'they confirm each (citizen) in his apathy' (Dem. Olynth. 34, 1)

b. e:si katheste:kotes kai para basile: apogegrammenoi
they.are appointed and by king enrolled
 'they receive their appointment from the king and are enrolled upon the king's list' (Xen. Cyr. 8, 6, 9, 3)

c. oüde ti neo:teron e:mi poisas nun
neither something newer I.am doing.PRV now
 'I do nothing new now' (Hdt. 4, 127, 1)

Even though all three constructions can be analysed syntactically in terms of predication, the one in (7c) looks rather aberrant in that respect. This is because the aoristic stem, as an exponent of perfective aspect, lays emphasis on the completion of an action or state, and is thus far less adjectival than the present (7a) and the perfect (7b) participle, which, because of their inherent aspectual meaning, lend themselves more readily to being used as adjectives.¹⁹

Participial periphrases are not prototypical predication by default, since participles, as a system, are intra-categorial (both verbs and adjectives). They partake in adjectival category by virtue of their nominal morphology. However, this adjectival dimension is not homogeneous. On semantic grounds, a participial system is gradient with respect to the extent that it fulfils the requirement of adjectives to be time-stable (Givón 1984: 52ff.).²⁰ The time-stability parameter involves aspect and constitutes one of the two factors that influence the adjectivalness of a participle. The other parameter is transitivity: a passive participle, which is by definition intransitive, is far more adjectival than an active one:

(8) a. Arioi de toksoisi eskeuasmenoι ε:san me:dikoisi
Arians PRT bows.with equipped they.were Media
 'The Arians were equipped with Median bows' (Hdt. 7, 66, 1).

¹⁸See Traugott (2010) for a detailed overview of the various approaches to grammaticalisation, with special emphasis on the most recent trends in the field.

¹⁹This has already been noted by Aerts (1965: 27). He speculates that the use of aorist participle in periphrasis poses several problems for the interpreter; although the other two periphrases – the present and the perfect – exhibit a certain degree of similarity, the aorist evidently has a different function.

²⁰Givón introduces the time-stability parameter as means for making distinctions among lexical classes. This notion was used extensively in the typological works treating adjectives (Bhat 1994; Wetzer 1996; Stassen 1997).

b. ε:n gar didaskon auto:s ho:s eksousian ekho:n
he.was PRT teaching them that power having
 'he was teaching them that he had power' (N.T. Matth. 7, 29, 1)

The active/transitive participle in (8b) demands the realisation of an object noun phrase, which in turn is not compatible with the adjectival dimension.

When it comes to the periphrases, the double properties of the participles have important repercussions; since the aorist active participle is the least adjectival one in terms of both parameters, the corresponding periphrasis is unstable as a predication and far more amenable to being recategorised as a verbal construction. This is in fact what can be posited to have taken place in the case at hand, with the loss of declensional properties being the final stage of a gradual distancing from the original predication pattern.

Morphological factors such as those referred to in section 2.3 must have played a significant role as well, but in my view should be seen as subordinate to the syntactic change, the role of which was decisive. Additionally, this approach explains why indeclinability appears only as a property of the aorist periphrases and not the present, despite the fact that present participles developed even stronger indeclinable tendencies at the same period (gerundial uses). In terms of semantics, the change can be noticed in the gradual appearance of the pluperfect meaning.

4.2. *The pluperfect meaning*

The next question to be answered is why and how the aorist periphrasis came to express the pluperfect meaning. From a grammaticalisation point of view, it is very common for a construction formed with a copula verb plus a past participle to start out its life as a grammatical form with some meaning in the realm of perfect (e.g. Dik 1987). The fluctuation of verbal forms between a preterite (roughly the original meaning of the aorist stem) and a perfect meaning is frequent and at the same time understandable, precisely because the temporal and aspectual characteristics of the two forms are close enough to admit an occasional merger (cf. Bybee, Revere & Pagliuca 1994: 51ff.). Thus, in terms of semantics the attested development makes sense.

However, the periphrasis does not appear to be a general means of perfect codification, but is restricted to the pluperfect alone. This means that in all the examples the auxiliary verb is marked for past tense (*iton* 'was') and not present (*eni* 'is'). A similar situation is easily traceable in the case of the Modern Greek HAVE perfect, which in the first centuries of its history occurs only in the past form; the present perfect is a later evolution formed by analogy (see Hatzidakis 1905: 598–609; Moser 1988: 242–6). In the case of the periphrasis in question here, no such evolution is attested in the texts, with the construction remaining only a pluperfect. This of course relates to the fact that, in contrast to the HAVE-periphrasis, our form went on to disappear in later times (see section 5.1).²¹

A more difficult issue to tackle is why the aorist periphrasis gained ground at the expense of the perfect periphrasis. Aerts (1965: 90) proposes the aforementioned (section 3.1) increasing syncretism of the perfect and aorist in order to explain this development. In line with Chantraine's (1927) argument about the merger of the two categories, Aerts argues that such an evolution influenced not only the monolectic verbal forms but also the corresponding

²¹It is not my purpose here to explore in detail why the grammaticalisation of the construction began from the pluperfect. This property can plausibly be attributed either to the narrative nature of the textual sources that favoured the use of grammatical forms with clear reference to the past or to a more structural, diachronic explanation (i.e. grounded in the grammatical features of the two constructional elements). For a detailed account see Giannaris (2011).

perfect and aorist periphrases. However, contrary to the finite synthetic perfect forms that were rapidly declining in usage, the corresponding perfect participial forms were still in use throughout the Koine and Early Medieval times. Even the active form, which was the first to be lost completely, holds its ground well. Despite this frequency in the perfect participle occurrence, the corresponding perfect periphrases are rare (Aerts 1965: 83–4). A short survey of the periphrastic use of participles in the Early Medieval narrative *the Life of St. John the Almsgiver* (6th c. AD) confirms this observation: the aorist form is by far the commonest (15 instances), the perfect passive one occurs 3 times, whereas the active is only found once. Additionally, in the Early Medieval *Chronicle of John Malalas* the perfect occurs seldom, being thus in sharp contrast with the numerous aorist constructions.

Given the apparent verbality of the aorist periphrasis that I have already argued for, it comes as no surprise that it gradually ousted the perfect periphrasis in the expression of the relevant meaning. The aorist periphrasis expanded its usage, not primarily because of the merging of the two paradigms, but because of a perceived unsuitability of the perfect participles for periphrastic use from some point onwards (probably during the Hellenistic–Roman period). This development brought about a functional specialisation in the case of the participles: the perfect participle, principally medio-passive, was used adjectivally, while aorist participles were reserved for verbal periphrasis.

Thus, an intermediate conclusion that can be drawn so far would be that the Medieval Greek pluperfect periphrasis I have concentrated on is the diachronic result of a grammaticalisation process impelled by the incompatibility of the aorist participle with the predication semantic properties, along with the failure of the original perfect periphrasis to meet the requirements of the verbal nature of the perfect. What our diachronic account so far leaves unaccounted for is why this is found so rarely during the Late Medieval Greek period, when actually the exact opposite would have been expected: proceeding further up the cline of grammaticalization means a concomitant rise in frequency as well.

5. BACK TO PHILOLOGY

5.1. *The obsolescence*

The rarity in attestation of the periphrasis under consideration poses serious problems, especially with reference to the functional integrity of the construction in the language of the Medieval period. The change described in section 4 does not explain why the advancing of the grammaticalization process co-occurs with a decline in periphrasis manifestation in the texts of the Late Medieval period. In connection with this problem, a look at the manuscript tradition turns out to be revealing. Particularly, the *Chronicle of Morea* provides interesting evidence for how this form was perceived by speakers in functional terms. The *codex Parisinus*, one of the two manuscripts that the basic edition was based upon, systematically omits the aorist periphrasis in favour of an *exo* + infinitive construction (or a simple aorist). The older *codex Haviensis* has the *ime*-periphrasis.²²

- (9) a. (H) ke iton apoθanonda i proti tu γινεκα
and he.was having-died the first his wife
‘and his first wife had died’ (Chron. Mor. 8073)
- b. (P) ke ixen apothani i proti tu γινεκα
and he.had died the first his wife
‘and his first wife had died’ (Chron. Mor. 8073)

²²This correspondence is first mentioned by Browning (1983: 110).

This sort of correspondence, which occurs several times, offers important evidence. The difference between the two manuscripts indicates that some sort of transition was in progress. The older manuscript attests the formally reduced constructions and reflects the progression of the grammaticalisation process; the newer replaces them, suggesting that the periphrases are rare because a new perfect construction has started to come into play.

Building on this observation, it can be argued that an advance in the process of grammaticalization evidenced by the loss of morphological material is actually a process that took place in the Early Medieval period, when this periphrasis was the commonest means for expressing the pluperfect. But this stage of the change did not find its way to the texts of the period. This makes much more sense if we take into consideration the fact that the majority of the Early Medieval texts represent a middle register Greek rather than the spoken language of the period.²³ Thus, it comes as no surprise that the indeclinable instances are mainly found in texts of the Late period, from which we obtain texts in clearly vernacular Greek. At the same time, the new *exo* ‘have’ perfect started growing and competing with the older constructions. The data in (9) reflect exactly the slow and gradual replacement that took place through the first centuries of the Late Medieval period.²⁴

The argument for an earlier chronology of the morphological loss is also supported by an isolated example which, however, is noteworthy if seen in the light of my previous observations. It is found in the early text of *Malalas*:

(10) harisamenos aftis pola ke ktisas to vuleftirion: pesonda gar
 given her many and bulding. *PRV* the parliament: having-fallen *PRT*
 in
it.was
 ‘[he] after he gave to her so much and built the parliament house, that had been
 collapsed’ (Malalas 211, 19)

In this passage, mentioned by Hatzidakis (1892: 144), we have an early instance of the agreement loss: the participial form *pesonda* should have been *pesan* in order to agree with its neuter singular subject *vuleftirion*.

The conclusion to be drawn from this evidence is that the careful examination of all the philological material can shed light on aspects of language change that theory would have next to nothing to say about.

5.2. New evidence

So far I have argued that the data found in the *Chronicle of Morea* and the *War of Troy*, depict an earlier state of affairs. Such a conclusion makes sheds light on why this periphrasis occurs so rarely. Philology can provide another piece of evidence in this regard. Let us look at one more example from the manuscript tradition of the *Chronicle of Morea*. In the verse 1692 the manuscripts give three variants:

²³The great bulk of the Early Medieval Greek texts are composed in a language that largely echoes many features of previous periods (Classical or Koine Greek).

²⁴It is not possible here to elaborate on the reasons why the *ime* periphrasis was subsequently replaced by the *exo* construction. The general decline in the use of all the *ime* periphrases, along with the fact that the *ime* periphrasis did not include the voice distinction, might have played a role. However, the whole issue needs further investigation.

(11) (H) isasi xalasasi (T) ixasi xalasonda (P) exalasasin;
They.were had-damaged they.had having-damaged they.damaged
 (Chron. Toc. 9, 2, 2189)

In the codices H and T (auriensis) we get a blend of BE and HAVE periphrasis (*ime* + infinitive). Evidently this inconsistency highlights the attempt to replace the obsolete periphrasis *ime* + aorist participle with the more modern *exo* + infinitive. Codex P replaces – as expected – the periphrastic form with a simple aorist. In all probability an *ime*-periphrasis should be opted for as being the *lectio difficilior*. This ‘mixing’ of forms shows how precious evidence can be distorted or ‘hidden’ through scribal and editorial interventions.

In the same vein, another example indicates how ‘new’ data can emerge. In the *Chronicle of Tocci* (another Medieval chronicle), a collocation, though not emended away by the editor, is marked as corrupted:

(12) aftos iton + minisondos + na katavasi turkus,
he he.was having-called COMP bring down Turks
 ‘This man called for the Turks to come’ (Chron. Toc. 9, 2, 2189)

Both these passages show how cautious we should be in the treatment of our textual evidence. A possible expansion of attestations can never be excluded completely. Such evidence strengthens the importance of the theoretical arguments set out here, and lessens the degree of uncertainty which is caused by the rarity of occurrence

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this article, I have attempted to shed light on the history of a hitherto neglected linguistic construction. Instead of approaching it as an exceptional and haphazard feature, I have attempted to systematise the evidence and offer a complete diachronic account of its development. The conclusion to be emphasised is that sophisticated linguistic concepts – such as grammaticalisation – can be a valuable means of putting problematic data into coherent perspective, and that a text-oriented analysis offered by more traditional methods, apart from guaranteeing the credibility of the data, can illustrate important aspects of change itself and thus deepen our understanding of the phenomenon.

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